

Congressman Earl Blumenauer's comments regarding HR 5890 - FISA AMENDMENTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2012:

For over a decade, I have deeply been concerned about the potential overreach of wiretapping legislation and efforts at the NSA. I have voted repeatedly in the past against unreasonable expansion of any administration's ability to intrude in the lives of unknowing and innocent Americans, and I will do so again today.

I remain confident that the dedicated members of the intelligence community do not need to erode the rights of Americans in order to protect them. Any apparent gains in security that may be achieved are modest and more than outweighed by longer-term potential loss of civil liberties and oversight, the sense of security that each American deserves. I'm troubled by the implications for our Fourth Amendment rights, the absence of meaningful court review, and the risk to American liberties that stem from the FISA Amendments Act.

Frankly I see no reason to rush into voting on a bill so deficient. The American people would be better served if we continued the debate and the examination, had thorough answers from NSA, and took up reauthorization based on a more complete review and process.

In fact, I think as we stand here today on the floor, not even the NSA knows the extent to which the FISA Amendment Act may potentially have been abused. The right approach would be refining this bill and more broadly taking a closer look at what over the last decade has become an intelligence community that is, frankly, some feel, growing out of control.

It's been over 11 years since 9/11. We ought to be able to get this right. We shouldn't be rushed into doing something that has significant long-term implications for every American.

You know, take a deep breath and take a step back. There are over 4.2 million Americans who hold a security clearance. That's more than the entire State of Oregon's population, and let's throw in the city of Seattle for good measure. Almost half of them hold Top Secret security clearances, more than people who reside in Maine or Idaho. When you've got those millions of people, you have an entity that is cumbersome, potential for abuse, and, frankly, potential to be infiltrated or have mistakes.

Think about it: 9/11 occurred in part not because we didn't have information. Remember the memo on Bush's desk warning of a potential attack from bin Laden?

What we are doing at the same time we are eroding American rights? We're piling on more and more and more information, and it's going to be extraordinarily difficult to sort through. We risk putting Americans in trouble.